



Louise D. Hose, PhD
Director

NATIONAL CAVE AND KARST RESEARCH INSTITUTE



Letter from the Institute Director

In December 2002, I accepted the greatest privilege of my life when I was selected to lead the National Park Service's effort to launch the National Cave and Karst Research Institute (NCKRI) in Carlsbad. Encouraged and gratified by the diversity and depth of support, I have seen the Institute rapidly grow and evolve over the past year. Our progress resulted from the efforts of traditional NCKRI supporters and a rapidly expanding range of stakeholders who connected with the Institute during the past 12 months. Cave and karst specialists from around the world have expressed strong interest and support for our mission by encouraging us to provide leadership worldwide in promoting the understanding and protection of cave and karst systems. The community of cave and karst researchers, educators, conservationists, managers, and cavers from Australia to Ukraine has demonstrated its recognition of the need for a strong, multidisciplinary, research and education center focused on the world's fragile and vulnerable cave and karst terrains by enthusiastically following and advising our efforts to craft the Institute into the most effective organization possible.

THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL CAVE AND KARST RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Karst and other cave-bearing terrains make up over 20% of the United States and the continents worldwide. These landscapes present unique challenges to urban and economic development. Karst aquifers rank as the most vulnerable groundwater to rapid and devastating contamination. While urban development has largely shunned karst lands in the past, some of the nation's fastest growing areas are now expanding into these terrains. State and local governments such as Florida and San Antonio understand this problem and now commit millions of dollars each year to study, monitor, and remediate contaminated karst water resources.

NCKRI has a broad mission... "to promote understanding and protection of cave and karst systems."

The challenges for cave and karst land owners and managers grow as populations encroach on previously isolated areas. The intentional vandalism to caves in Sequoia National Park in fall 2003 and continuing concerns with inadvertent hydrocarbon contamination of cave streams under Bowling Green, Kentucky, show the need for more effective education and preservation efforts directed toward the general public. Many individuals and organizations from across the country and around the world are addressing these issues, but they require sustained and growing support in their efforts. The Institute recognizes this need and places a high priority on supporting and facilitating cave and karst related research and educational efforts.

FISCAL CHALLENGES

One of the National Cave and Karst Research Institute's biggest challenges promises to be securing funding from both federal and non-federal sources. Our legislative mandate limits the potential federal contribution to 50%, requiring at least half of both operating and capital funding to come from non-federal sources. The Institute enjoys comfortable "seed" funds, thanks largely to the efforts of the people of Carlsbad, New Mexico, and their representatives. Our current, baseline funding is approximately \$700,000/year and the State of New Mexico has provided a little over 50% of the Institute's operational funds. New Mexico and the City of Carlsbad also account for 55% of the \$4.3 million obligated for the design and construction of a headquarters building. NCKRI's three primary partners, the National Park Service, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, and the City of Carlsbad, are working closely together on the design of the two-story, approximately 24,000 square foot building near the Pecos River next to downtown Carlsbad. While we will require more funds to outfit the building and effectively operate activities as envisioned, these seed funds have facilitated a rapid and strong start towards establishing the Institute. Our present budget adequately covers today's limited operations; however, we will seek to expand our financial support in order to meet the many challenges that our partners and stakeholders expect the Institute to address.

**Participants attending
the Vision Building
Workshop suggested
the following core
values for
NCKRI:**

**Science-Based
Stewardship**

Objective Science

Education

**Shared
Decision-Making**

**Benefits for all
Segments of Society**

Leadership



**Passage lined with aragonite
and calcite crystals.**

BUILDING THE INSTITUTE'S VISION

The National Cave and Karst Research Institute has a broad mission, summarized as existing “to promote understanding and protection of cave and karst systems” by a group of distinguished representatives from over 20 major stakeholder organizations participating in our Vision Building Workshop in October 2003. This group of scientists, educators, land managers, and leaders from government agencies, educational institutes, and non-profit organizations came together for two days in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, to consider both the scope of activities that NCKRI should pursue and how to build the organizational structure to best support those activities. The enthusiasm and passion that participants brought to the discussions bode extremely well for the future of the Institute and the mutually beneficial partnerships that we can expect to develop.

The participants promoted a broad variety of needs that might be addressed by NCKRI and came to a general agreement on the Institute's scope and the best type of organizational characteristics to meet these needs. A summary of the meeting is available at <http://www2.nature.nps.gov/nckri/news.htm>.

We hope to release a business plan in 2004 that will reflect and build on this and other valuable input we received over the last year.

PARTNERSHIPS

In 2003, NCKRI made great strides in continuing to build partnerships and expand beyond federal government circles. Several partnership projects initiated in the previous 18 months began to produce results, including the publication of three books and the continuing growth of the National Karst Map Project. Our staff responded to a variety of agencies, non-government organizations, individuals, and the media when they sought assistance on cave and karst related projects. NCKRI staff and associated faculty have also produced an impressive publication and professional service record in just one year that is documented in the back of this report. The Institute moved towards fulfilling its legislative mandate to be jointly administered with the National Park Service exercising “indirect control,” by signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the National Park Service, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, and the City of Carlsbad establishing a triad partnership. We look forward to expanding our network of formal partnerships with other governmental and non-governmental organizations across the country and internationally in the future.

LOOKING TOWARDS OUR FUTURE

The National Cave and Karst Research Institute enjoys a strong and varied base of partners to address the critical need of protecting vital natural resources. In addition to our nation's cherished Park and other federal lands, the Institute will be available to work with cave and karst programs throughout the world. We look to develop mutually supportive partnerships with all organizations and individuals striving towards better understanding and management of karst, including private industry and non-profit, academic, and government groups. The Institute seeks to serve as a respected world leader in promoting science-based understanding and sustainable stewardship of caves and karst lands. As you read the following pages, I invite you to think about how you or your organization might join NCKRI in crafting the strongest and most effective coalition possible to support cave and karst education and research worldwide.

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A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Louise D. Hose". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

**Louise D. Hose, PhD
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